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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to improve the internal and external editing skills of high school students so that their papers would reflect thought and care. The target population was 67 regular level tenth grade English students in a predominantly middle class high school in southeastern Florida. A combination of strategies were used to improve writing and revision, such as: (1) meaningful assignments in lieu of artificial expository formats; (2) process journals; (3) trained peer response/editing groups; (4) open-ended responses; and (5) word processing for editing. Data analysis revealed the students' improved attitudes towards both writing and revision, as well as improved grades on writing assignments. (Contains 31 references; appendixes are a questionnaire concerning the student's pre-writing process and a questionnaire on sentence stems.) (NKA)

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ED 376 495

A Classroom-Based Approach to Improving Revision Skills in Secondary School Students

by

Margery Marcus

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A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Margery Marcus under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

July 10, 1994

Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

A Classroom-Based Approach to Improving Revision Skills in Secondary School Students. Marcus, Margery, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Writing Instruction/ Secondary School English/Revision/Writing Process.

This practicum was designed to improve the internal and external editing skills of high school students so that their papers would reflect thought and care. The target population was 67 regular level tenth grade English students in a predominately middle class high school.

The writer used a combination of strategies to improve writing and revision. She designed meaningul assignments in lieu of artificial expository formats, introduced process journals, trained peer response/editing groups, employed open-ended responses, and used word processing.

Analysis of the data revealed students' improved attitudes towards both writing and revision, as well as improved grades on writing assignments.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

This practicum was implemented in a comprehensive high school serving a predominately middle class community in southeastern Florida. The average family income in this suburb of 85,000 is $48,500, making it one of the wealthiest cities in the state. Particularly known for its fine schools, the community attracts many professionals willing to commute to surrounding cities so their children can attend local schools here. Since education is highly valued, parents support neighborhood schools actively through fund-raising and other volunteer efforts.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The high school in which the writer teaches English is 20 years old, the oldest of the community's three high schools. The school enrolls approximately 1900 students, 77% Caucasian, 12% Black, 7% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and less than 1% Indian. Sixty percent of its student body continues on to either two or four-year colleges. The school's drop out rate is 1.72%, lower than the county average of 2.88% and the state average of 3.87%. Less than 1% of the student

body participates in the free or reduced lunch program. One principal, five assistant administrators, 93 full-time faculty, and 32 support staff serve the student body. The high school offers a variety of vocational and academic courses; the latter divided into four tracks, skills or basic, regular, honors, and gifted. Students with IQ scores of 130 are automatically placed in gifted programs, while teacher recommendations form the basis of student placement in the three remaining tracks. English students, then, are placed according to recommendations of the previous year's teacher based on their reading scores, academic performance, and writing abilities.

The writer has been an English teacher for 17 years. Aside from a one year stint in middle school, her teaching career has been in high schools. During the 1993-94 school year, she taught 137 sophomores representing three tracks, regular, honors and gifted. The departmentalized curriculum necessitated the teaching of thinking skills, writing skills and research skills, all revolving around works of world literature as the core content area. Aside from meeting county guidelines, the writer was also responsible for fulfilling the mandates of the state's Writing Enhancement Act, which specified that students must produce one graded piece of writing per week.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The writer's two regular level English classes presented the greatest challenges to her. Supposedly, these two classes of 67 students in all, were homogeneously grouped, but in actuality, students' ability levels varied greatly. Reading scores ranged from the sixth grade through college, and writing skills varied as well. Most students verbalized a desire to continue their education beyond high school, but aside from several particularly motivated youngsters, most were, at best, lackluster in their enthusiasm for school. These adolescents generally were passive learners, docile if not pushed or prodded to perform too hard. And yet, these young people were not lazy outside of the classroom. Nearly all worked 20 hours or more a week to support personal luxuries, most notably their cars. Sizer (1992) might well have had these teens in mind when he wrote about the differences in students' energy levels in class versus on their jobs.

Students' lassitude spilled over into their performance in English class. Students, eager to be done with their

classroom commitments, were slapdash in their rush to complete their work, including their weekly writing assignments.

Students willingly engaged in the more freewheeling aspects of the writing process, namely brainstorming and organizing activities, but their papers did not reflect careful revision. Students were consistently unable to revise rough drafts in order to complete final, error-free papers reflecting thought and care. Additionally, they were poor editors of their work and the work of others.

Problem Documentation

Students' inability to revise their writing with care and accuracy was evidenced in several ways. As students neared completion of a major writing assignment, the writer spoke privately with five whose papers needed substantial reworking. All five students interviewed viewed revision, not as an opportunity to improve upon or expand their work, but as a sign of failure. For them, revision was a pointless activity, merely staving off the inevitable poor grade.

Despite the writer's emphasis on the importance of revision, students continued to rewrite hastily and haphazardly, resulting in poor grades. Twenty students out of 30 recently earned grades of "C" or below on papers which lacked support, organization, and focus.

Equally frustrating were students who merely recopied

and submitted their final papers, without correcting the major convention errors contained in their first drafts. On a major writing assignment, 25 out of 30 students submitted final papers which contained the same errors as their initial efforts.

Causative Analysis

The diverse causes of the problem are rooted in a combination of factors ranging from the general cultural patterns characterizing today's schools to the specific guidelines for writing given to students in previous years. The educational establishment's emphasis on order, objectivity, and quantifiable results allows for little reflection on the part of both students and teachers (Schon, 1983). Students quickly learn to negotiate through the system by finding the right answers. Reflection, by nature, is time-consuming and offers unpredictable results. Teachers, charged with meeting the needs of 30 students in a classroom, would be hardpressed to plan lessons incorporating reflective activities (Schon). Therefore, the revision process, since it necessitates reflection, is not prized by students, nor emphasized by teachers.

Last year as freshmen, the writer's students received instruction in one form of writing--the five paragraph, expository theme. This type of writing, exclusively

analytical, forces students to dwell more on form than content, emphasizing structure rather than meaning. In their zeal to teach students to achieve a detached, analytical tone in their work, teachers have nearly succeeded in stamping out students' natural voices. Additionally, freshmen writing assignments, limited to five paragraph themes, were written solely for an audience of one--the teacher.

Students have little experience revising since the teacher/audience of one also performs editorial functions. Previous experience has taught students that the teacher will probably circle spelling errors, correct several awkward sentences, and comment about form before putting a grade on the paper. Students have rarely been given the opportunity to rewrite their papers to improve their grade. Additionally, they have received no training in self-editing; their lack of editing experience coupled with their dependence upon teacher-as-editor combine to create writers unclear about what revision really means.

In the writer's class, students were expected to revise before submitting their final papers; however, the time-consuming nature of the revision process left many students bored and impatient with their assignments. Redrafting by hand takes time; ideas often become lost in a combination of bad handwriting and messy correcting.

Wadded up drafts littered students' desks as young writers become short-tempered when revising.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Professionals have written extensively about the problem, noting that revision is the most difficult stage in the writing process (Murray, 1982; Doherty, 1965/1968; Elbow, 1981; Kirby & Liner, 1988). Murray adds that it is the least researched and the least taught writing skill. Unfortunately, most students view revision as failure (Murray, 1982; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988). The moans and groans which accompany the revision process in the writer's classroom echoed down the hall. While the writer sees revision as an opportunity for her students to improve, they, in turn, see rewriting as punishment for a poorly done first effort.

Revision actually occurs in two broad stages--internal which is concerned with content form, language and voice, and external, involving more superficial editing (Murray). Elbow and Belanoff (1989) further divide revision into three stages, separating internal revision into first, "reseeing," and then, "reworking." Their third stage, copyediting, corresponds to Murray's external revision.

Revision is an important element of good writing (Murray, 1968, 1982; Graves, 1983; Atwell, 1987; Kirby & Liner, 1988). Murray (1982) notes that rewriting

separates the amateur from the professional, and even quotes 50 different authors on the importance of revising. For Murray, revision is a discovery process where students create their meaning to communicate to an audience. Studies by both Bank (1984-85) and Applebee (1984) show an important link between success in writing and the ability to revise. In the writer's classroom, students were interested in merely completing the assignment rather than excelling. Successful writing for these students meant writing that was good enough to earn a passing grade; students, then, had little reason to value revision as an avenue to successful writing.

Teachers must accept part of the responsibility for students' attitudes towards revision. Too often, revision for teachers means correcting superficial mechanics (Kirby & Liner, 1988; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988; Rabin, 1990). Teachers who see their role as mere copyeditors perpetuate the notion that revision simply means hunting for convention errors. Zemelman and Daniels devote an entire chapter to the English teacher's obsession with red ink. They note that teachers, in their well-meaning effort to lead students to writing perfection, end up antagonizing them and conveying the message that spelling and punctuation are the main ingredients in a paper. The students who sit in the writer's class have had their messages drowned out by oceans of red ink.

For the most part, students write for the teacher, which then becomes an exercise in trying to please an authority figure rather than in trying to convey meaning. Every English teacher has had her share of students who think that impressing a teacher means using elevated vocabulary in incredibly conplex sentences. The result, of course, is mangled, convoluted prose which violates the main purpose of writing, communication. Elbow and Belanoff (1989) even give this type of writing a name, dubbing it "Engfish." When writing for the teacher-audience, students may not be as motivated to revise, since relying on the teacher to decipher meaning offers little incentive to revise. "You know what I mean," was an often-repeated whine heard in the writer's classroom. Making audiences more public, therefore, increases revision (Applebee, 1984; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988).

The way in which writing is taught is as important as the way in which it is evaluated. Moffet (1983) warns of the dangers of teaching writing through decomposition. He notes that standard classroom techniques such as practicing sentences and other exercises in isolation reinforce students' sense that writing is not real. Boring exercises divorced from any real life connection contribute to students' belief that writing in English class has little relationship to the outside world (Moffet).

Peer response and editing groups, while widely advocated, may offer students little real help (Freedman cited in Neubert & McNelis, 1990; Graner, 1987). Peers, unskilled or untrained to respond and/or edit, provide little guidance to a writer in need of feedback. When asked to evaluate each other's work, students in the writer's class typically wrote a superlative at the top of the paper, declaring that everything was perfect. Their inexperience, coupled with their fear of hurting each other's feelings, combined to create ineffective peer writing groups. For student writing groups to be successful, they must be selected by the teacher and trained properly (O'Donnell, 1980). Revision is a skill which must be taught.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. At the completion of the practicum, students' papers will reflect careful internal and external revision. Students will view revision as an integral part of the writing process. They will revise willingly, recognizing revision as a means of discovering their meaning. Their new-found pride in their work will be mirrored in the products they produce.

Expected Outcomes

1. Written self evaluations in journals will show that 20 students out of 30 in a given class period will view revision positively.

2. On a given writing assignment, 18 out of 30 final papers will reflect internal revision, earning at least a "4" on the state's writing assessment rubric.

3. On an assigned writing, 20 students out of 30 will have corrected in their final papers all convention errors contained in their first drafts.

Measurement of Outcomes

Students will be required to keep a weekly journal to reflect upon their attitudes towards writing in general, and revision, in particular. They will document their growing awareness of the processes of writing, examining and evaluating their growth throughout the practicum experience. The writer will collect students' journal twice during the practicum, once at its mid-point and again at its conclusion. Twenty journal entries out of 30 will express students' awareness that revision is positively linked to writing.

The state writing assessment rubric was designed and distributed by the state to provide teachers and students with the guidelines used to evaluate students' efforts in the state's yearly writing assessment. Since the rubric provides clear documentation for judging students' work, the writer has adopted it in her classroom, grading written work according to its 1-6 scale. Students, then, are already familiar with the criteria used to assess their writing. A "4" on the rubric reflects above-average work; 18 students out of 30 earning "4" or above will show that the writing of the majority of students in a given class has improved.

For the external editing process, students will be given a checklist to use in proofreading

their papers and the papers of their peers. Students will note convention errors on first drafts, and at least 20 students out of 30 will have corrected all their convention errors in their final papers.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The literature suggests many solutions for solving the problem presented by students consistently unable to revise rough drafts in order to complete final papers reflecting thought and care. Providing students with an audience larger than the teacher has shown to be an effective way to motivate students to write and revise carefully (Kirby & Liner, 1988; Applebee, 1984; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988; Murray, 1968, 1982; Elbow & Belanoff, 1989). Kirby and Liner stress the importance of designing assignments addressing real audiences, such as one's peers or the public. Elbow and Belanoff note the link between audience and purpose. Defining their audience will help students make important decisions about their writing which will affect their message. Simple assignments such as letter writing and note writing to a friend are effective ways for students to go beyond writing solely for the teacher (Kirby & Liner; Jackson, 1992).

Publishing is one way to reach a real audience (Kirby & Liner, 1988; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988).

Notwithstanding the concerns of researchers, namely that publishing may intimidate certain students (Elbow, 1981; Graves, 1983), or emphasize product over process (Parsons, 1991), it can appeal to students' sense of accomplishment in producing publishable work.

Teachers, naturally, play a critical role in the writing process. First, they must be sincerely enthusiastic about their own writing (Atwell, 1987), and they must share their writing with their students. Murray suggests a technique as simple as revising one's own work on an overhead in class to encourage students to revise.

Teacher response to student writing is critical to the revision process (Freedman, 1987; Elbow & Belanoff, 1989; Moffet, 1983; Grant-Davie & Shapiro, 1987). Guiding student writing by responding to it as a reader rather than as a critic will help students revise. How teachers respond is more important than how much they respond, claim Grant-Davie and Shapiro (1987), who recommend teachers use questions and suggestions in the margins of students' work, not judgments and criticism. Rabin (1990) and Atwell (1987) also recommend questions as a way to get students to clarify their meaning. Teacher response does not necessarily have to be written; Atwell uses brief mini-conferences to help students explore their ideas.

Teachers, of course, are not the only source of feedback in the classroom. Peers may play an important

role in the revision process, especially given the realitiies of the typical English classroom. If what Moffet (1983) claims is true--that response during the writing process, not afterwards, is critical--then one teacher cannot possible respond intelligently to 32 students in the midst writing. Peers, properly trained in response and editing skills, can help each other revise (Moffet, 1983; Neubert & McNelis; 1990; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988; Dudley, 1989).

Research has shown that sentence combining exercises can be a powerful strategy to use during the revision process (Mellon, 1981; Moffet, 1983; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988). Sentence combining increases syntactic fluency without the drill and repetition associated with grammar exercises. Clifford and Waterhouse (1983) note that sentence combining involves rearranging and revising, much like internal and external revision.

Journals can be an effective way for students both to reflect upon their writing and to record their growth as writers (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988). Elbow and Belanoff recommend that young writers keep a process journal to evaluate their progress and record their reactions to their own writing.

Studies show that word processing can be a valuable revision and composing tool (Kurth, 1987; Mehan, 1985;

Le, 1989; Sandery, 1989; Wepner, 1987; Elbow and Belanoff, 1989). Aside from making editing easier, word processing decreases students' negative attitudes towards writing (Le, 1989; Kurth, 1987). Elbow and Belanoff advocate word processing for composing as well as revising, adding that it encourages collaboration among peers.

All the solutions proposed in the literature are viable given the requisite time, space, and resources. Publishing as a means of encouraging students to address a broader audience than the teacher was one workable suggestion given the writer's school resources. Since the writer's students were already accustomed to reading their work aloud in class, publishing would seem a natural next step to them. Photocopying facilities are readily available, making distribution of a published product relatively simple.

Solutions which draw heavily on this teacher's time would be less easily implemented. Given the demands of the teaching day and the total student load (137 students divided into four classes), too many teacher-intensive solutions are impractical. For example, responding meaningfully to 67 papers for each writing assignment (not to mention the papers generated by the writer's honors and gifted classes) was a Herculean task sure to end in frustration and resentment. Mini-conferences, as

suggested by Atwell (1987), proved to be more practical while accomplishing the same results. Additionally, the writer can easily model the revision process given her ready access to an overhead projector as well as a classroom computer and a projection panel.

Peer editing and response groups become an attractive solution given the writer's situation. Peers groups, trained to respond and edit, can assume an important role in the revision process.

Both sentence combining and journal writing can be integrated naturally into the curriculum. The former replaces grammar drills which have little impact on student writing, and the latter offers an avenue for students to evaluate and explore their growth as writers.

Resources in the writer's school make word processing a particularly attractive solution. Since the school principal is committed to infusing technology into all aspects of the curriculum, the environment encourages experimentation. The English Department houses a computer lab with 35 MacClassics, and the library provides six computers for student use. Several of the writer's regular students are quite sophisticated in their knowledge of computers, and are eager to train those who are not.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer implemented a combination of solutions which resulted in students' papers reflecting careful revision. Literature abounds with advocates of journal writing, who recommend the strategy for generating ideas, reflection, and self-evaluation (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989; Zemelman & Daniels, 1988; Atwell, 1987). Students in the writer's classes were required to keep a process journal to reflect upon their writing and to record their growth as writers. They were asked to write in their journals weekly, recording their progress, noting their attitudes towards their work. The writer's practicum journal complemented students' writing, as her journal writing mirrored theirs. Excerpts from students' journals documented their growth. Additionally, students were required to complete a teacher-made process analysis form (see Appendix A) which asked them to reflect upon their thinking about a given assignment.

The writer trained peer response and editing groups to facilitate the revision process in class. Moffet (1983) stresses the importance of feedback during, not after, the writing process. Peer response groups can listen and respond to one another, when the sheer numbers of students in a class (37 in one section alone) prohibits

the writer from meeting the feedback needs of all her students. Response groups can be especially effective in internal revision, while providing students with an audience other than the teacher. Editing groups can aid external revision; helping each other, guided by checklists, produce error-free drafts.

The writer assumed the role of fellow writer and coach, modeling assignments for students on an overhead or a classroom computer. She wrote and revised in public, offering her work for evaluation. During peer group work, she held mini-conferences with students, responding with questions and suggestions, not judgments.

The writer experimented with different strategies for teaching writing. She planned assignments to allow students' own voices to come through. Sentence combining, freewriting, memo and note writing, guided imagery and process reflections assumed a role in her classroom.

Word processing provided the final synthesis during the practicum. It made revising and editing more immediate for students. Students' final products were published and distributed throughout the writer's classes. An audience larger than the teacher motivated students to take more care; it gave their work meaning, and

encouraged their natural voices to come through. As students' work took on more meaning for them, their final products reflected careful internal and external revision.

Report of Action Taken

Throughout the three month implementation period, the writer's regular level classes focused almost exclusively on writing and revision. The groundwork for the months ahead was laid during the first week. At the onset, the writer required students to set aside a portion of their looseleaf notebooks for writing assignments, taking special care not to mention the "j" word, since years of experience have taught her that students react negatively to the word "journal." Their very first assignment asked them to brainstorm a list of 10 topics they would like to write about. Most lists were predictable, including topics like friendship, sports, and music. These lists would later become a valuable source of ideas for writers who complained they had nothing to write about. During this week, the writer also introduced a warm-up strategy she would use during the entire practicum. Several days a week she began class with "quick write" topics, asking students to write for 10 minutes on a given topic, anything from birth order to loneliness. The writer wrote along with students and then shared her work aloud. Several

times throughout the practicum, the lesson plan of the day was abandoned because students were so intent upon sharing their "quick writes."

During week two, the writer formed student response/editing groups and conducted "fishbowl" exercises modeling response. Students were asked to name one person they would feel comfortable working with; the writer formed groups taking these pairs into account, and posted group assignments on newsprint in the classroom. The fishbowl exercises originated from a "quick write" about friendship. Her class seated in an outside circle, the writer and a volunteer response group sat in an inner circle on the floor. The small group was instructed to listen to each member's paper and respond to two questions-- What did they like best about the paper? What did they want to know more about? Each member of the group read his/her paper aloud and received constructive criticism which could then be incorporated into subsequent revisions. Response groups proceeded in this fashion throughout the practicum. As the writer circulated among response groups, she held mini-conferences with individual students about their work. These mini-conferences were a natural extension of the response groups.

Students gained experience in using the state's writing

assessment rubric during week three. The writer distributed the rubric, and discussed it with students, offering a mneumonic device for reinforcing the categories stressed by the rubric. Students could easily remember the made-up word "SOFU," which stands for support, organization, focus, and use of major and minor conventions. Students were asked to grade an anonymous essay written by a peer in another class; they then had to defend their evaluation according to the rubric. This exercise in using the rubric was repeated three times during implementation using a variety of assignments.

During the third week, the writer also introduced students to audience as a variable in writing through a simple letter writing activity which totally captivated students' attention. Students sitting across the room from each other were asked to write letters introducing themselves to each other. The letters were delivered, and students responded in another letter. In discussing the assignment afterwards, students were able to recognize three variables which made a difference in their writing: topic (their favorite--themselves), audience, and anticipated response.

Writing a personal narrative was the focus of week four. The writer clipped a moving first person narrative

from the local newspaper and read it to the class. Using it as a model, students were asked to narrate an experience of their own in which they had learned a lesson. Writing and polishing these narratives became an activity which lasted throughout the duration of the implementation period. While students continued working on these narratives-in-progress, the writer aimed to increase students' sentence fluency by introducing sentence combining exercises during week five. On the chalkboard she modeled a sentence combining activity with the whole class, then had students work together in their writing groups to complete a paragraph combining sentences as specified in the exercise. These paragraphs were written on overhead transparencies and defended before the whole class. By week five, it had become obvious that students needed review in pronoun-antecedent agreement as well as in avoiding fragments and run-ons. Suffice it to note that grammar mini-lessons were not as popular with students as "quick writes." Also during this week, students were asked to choose four "quick writes" to be revised and submitted for a grade.

By week six, several students were composing and revising in the classroom on a MacClassic that had been given to the teacher by her principal. A guided imagery

acitivity during week six was one of the highlights of implementation. Following Zemelman and Daniels' (1988) script, the writer led students back to a time in their lives they had sustained a loss. Many students would later choose their loss paper as an example of their best work.

During weeks seven and eight, students continued to work in response groups, polishing their paper before heading to the word processing lab. The writer asked students to choose the one work they wished her to respond to; she responded to each in the form of questions rather than comments. Before students submitted this assignment, they were asked to think about the thinking that went into their work by completing a teacher-made process sheet and attaching it to their papers. Week nine, response groups added editing to their chores, as they read each other's work, guided by an editing checklist on the chalkboard. The checklist varied from day to day; some days students were asked to help each other with spelling; some days run-on sentences were targeted. Students also selected one essay to type in the word processing lab.

The writer's students worked in the word processing lab several days a week during weeks 10, 11, 12, learning word processing while typing, and editing. Difficulties encountered here hampered classes from completing one

publication consisting of all their work, although students were able to distribute their individual essays. The unavailability of the lab was the first problem encountered by the writer as teachers vyed for computer time during these last months of school. Once in the lab, the writer was faced with 37 students whose computer skill ranged from none to highly advanced. Even with several students functioning as aides, teaching keyboarding along with word processing was daunting. Students did manage to complete typing their narratives, but the process was much more complex and teacher intensive than the writer had envisioned.

The last week of the practicum, the writer asked students to reflect back upon the year by completing a sentence stem exercise she had developed (see Appendix B). Nearly all of students in the writer's regular classes noted that writing was the one area in which they felt they had shown the most growth.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Students in the writer's two regular level tenth grade English classes were consistently unable to revise rough drafts in order to complete final, error-free papers reflecting thought and care. Additionally, they were poor editors of their work and the work of others. A combination of solutions were applied to the problem. The writer emphasized the process of writing through process journals and process analysis forms. She formed and trained response/editing groups, modeled writing, held mini-conferences, utilized various student-centered strategies for teaching writing, introduced sentence combining techniques, and used word processing to help eliminate convention errors.

The first outcome of the practicum stated that written self evaluations in student journals would show that 20 students out of 30 in a given class period would

view revision positively. This outcome was achieved beyond the writer's expectations. Data collected from journals and class evaluations revealed that 25 students out of 30 in the writer's second period class viewed writing and revision in positive terms. An analysis of their journal entries revealed that all 25 students enjoyed writing about their personal experiences, and sharing them with the class. Students' entries showed that they did not distinguish writing from revision; internal editing became a necessary part of communicating their message. Sentence stem exercises also revealed that 28 out of 30 students felt that writing was the one area in which they had improved most throughout the year.

The second outcome projected that on a given writing assignment, 18 out of 30 final papers would reflect internal revision, earning at least a "4" on the state's writing assessment rubric. This outcome was achieved beyond the writer's expectations. In the writer's second period class, 5 papers out of 30 earned a "5" (equivalent to an "A"), and 15 papers earned a "4" (equivalent to a "B") on a personal narrative assignment. All 20 papers reflected carefully crafted elaboration, organization, and focus.

The practicum's third outcome stated that on an assigned writing, 20 students out of 30 would have corrected

in their final drafts all convention errors contained in their first drafts. This outcome was not achieved to the extent that the writer had envisioned. Fifteen students out of 30 were able to eliminate all convention errors on a major assignment; the papers of the remaining 15 students still contained at least one error, despite peer editing groups and the availability of word processing as a tool. Spelling was a consistent problem, with 10 papers containing at least one spelling error. Two papers contained subject-verb agreement errors, and three papers had comma faults.

Discussion

The results of this practicum validate those researchers who state that writing and revision are processes through which students can discover meaning (Murray, 1968, 1982; Graves, 1983; Moffet, 1983). When the writer began to focus students on meaning rather than mechanics, students' attitudes towards writing, in general, and revising, in particular, improved as their work took on significance to them. Indeed, attitudes towards revision are inseparable from attitudes towards writing. By largely abandoning artificial, expository formats and concentrating on assignments to encourage students to find their own meaning and reach larger audiences, the writer was able

to overcome student resistance to writing and revising. "Quick write" assignments were so popular because students knew their work would be evaluated for content rather than mechanics. Students also knew that "quick writes" were to be shared by those who wished to volunteer to read aloud, so many students wrote with an audience of their peers in mind. When pressed for a meaningful "quick write" assignment, the writer would select a topic from those lists generated by students on the first day of the practicum. Students began to look forward to these short assignments, and admonished the writer when the day's lesson omitted them.

The one writing assignment, however, which produced the most compelling student work, was the one which came out of the guided imagery lesson. Zemelman and Daniels (1988) note that such lessons help students retrieve vital memories to be incorporated into po.erful narratives. They note that in this exercise the teacher provides the framework for memory gathering, while the student draws upon his/her inner resources to fill in the content. The the writer followed the script provided by the researchers, leading students back to a time in their lives they had suffered a loss. Student response was dramatic--total silence as students traveled into their pasts, then quiet

sobs as many recalled painful losses. Returning from their trip into the past, students were asked to recall the sights, sounds and feelings associated with their loss. Sharing aloud was cathartic as students cried, comforted each other, and established a sense of community that remained throughout the balance of the year. Many students mourned the death of grandparents; several reflected on the loss of a parent through divorce. One girl's father is lost to her as he serves a prison term; one boy revealed his guilt over his father's violent death. One particularly tender story dealt with a young girl's realization that childhood was lost forever. The writer shared the results of this technique with other English teachers; one colleague who used it with similarly successful results thanked her warmly.

Writing about the thought processes entailed in producing in a piece of writing focused students on the recursive nature of writing (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989). Excerpts from student journals and thinking analysis forms revealed that students developed a growing awareness that writing entails thought over time. (Despite the one entry that read "I learned that I can write very well without thinking of what I'm doing"!) Two students echoed each other in separate journal entries; one said "I believe

I can express myself more when I write than when I talk," and the other wrote "Taking the time to think first made me write better."

Since teacher response to student writing is critical to the revision process (Freedman, 1987; Elbow & Belanoff, 1989; Moffet; 1983), the writer changed from an editor of mechanical errors to a reader offering suggestions and questions rather than judgments. At first, it was difficult to assume this new role. Too many years of reading papers hunting for errors conditioned the writer to circling mistakes and assigning a grade. Students, too, had to adapt to the writer's new role. They complained at first that she offered little guidance. One irate young man said, "How do I know what to fix if you don't tell me?" Eventually, he turned to the writer one day and observed, "The more questions you ask me about my work, the longer my writing gets."

While students profited from the writer's responses as well as their writing group's, editing groups were less successful in helping each other eliminate convention errors entirely. The writer theorizes a combination of factors at work here. Since the writer refused to play the role of sole copy editor, students had to rely upon each other to find and correct mechanical errors. Students in the

writer's class had little knowledge of grammar per se, and while sentence combining helped their fluency, it did little to solve the problem of fragments, run-ons, subject-verb agreement and spelling errors. Editorial checklists provided by the teacher helped as did the computer's spell checker (when students used it). Word processing, while engaging students, also has the ability to help students produce error-free drafts, when used correctly (Kurth, 1987; Mehan, 1985; Wepner, 1987; Elbow & Belanoff, 1989). Unfortunately, fragmented end-of-the year scheduling in the lab combined with students largely untrained in the use of technology, hampered all students from completing totally error-free papers. The responsibility here is squarely the writer's; students would have benefited from more time in the lab and better organized instruction.

The practicum produced several unexpected outcomes. One was the sense of community engendered among the students in the writer's classes as they shared their writing with one another. Desk arranged in one large circle rather than straight rows mirrored the close feelings students developed for each other. The writer, in sharing her own personal work with the class, began to feel more like her students' coach rather than an authoritarian figurehead. The writer, influenced by her success in tapping into

students' real voices, designed literary assignments similar to the personal narrative. For instance, during their study of Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, students were asked to assume the persona of a character in the novel and narrate a specific scene from that character's point of view. To reveal their understanding of Act I of Julius Caesar, students had to write a letter to Brutus, detailing the reasons why he had to act to save the republic. These assignments were popular with students who were able to write about literature in formats other than the five paragraph theme. The idea of reflecting about oneself as a writer was extended to reflecting about oneself as a researcher. At the completion of their Social Studies research paper, the writer asked students to think about the processes they went through as both writers and researchers in that class. One student wrote, "Because of all the thinking I do for Mrs. Marcus, it was easier to think for Mr. Kramer [Social Studies teacher], too."

The success of the practicum reinforces for the writer the important role the teacher plays in determining students' attitudes in class. When the writer began to focus on process rather than product, on content rather than form, and on responding rather than judging, students' work improved as their attitudes about writing

and revising improved.

Recommendations

Based on the writer's experiences implementing this practicum, four recommendations seem appropriate.

1. Integrate writing into all aspects of the English curriculum so that it becomes a natural part of each class period. Setting aside one or two days a week, or even a marking period devoted to writing, isolates writing from reading, vocabulary, and other components of the curriculum.

2. Require students to begin keeping a writing/process journal on the very first day of school. Establish the writing-thinking connection at once.

3. Plan selectively and carefully. Lessons focusing on the writing process take time. Literature study and vocabulary development may take a backseat to writing without careful planning.

4. Those teachers contemplating using a school computer lab need to assess their students' computer skills, and provide time for additional instruction for those students proceeding slowly. If one's classes are large, as were the writer's, asking a peer to assist in the lab would facilitate instruction.

Dissemination

Because the writer's colleagues have expressed interest

in the practicum, the writer plans to offer a workshop to school faculty members during school planning days this fall. She will circulate the practicum abstract, and make copies of her report available through her school's professional library.

She plans to work with an assistant professor of Education at a local university to co-author an article based on her practicum experiences. Finally, she will disseminate her final report through the Broward Council of Teachers of English, the county English curriculum office, and the county Learning Resources Center.

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APPENDIX A

THINKING ABOUT PROCESS

THINKING ABOUT PROCESS

Answer the following questions concerning the process you went through for this assignment:

1. What are the strengths in your paper?

2. What did you write in this paper that makes you feel uneasy?

3. What do you want me to look for as I read your paper?

4. What grade would you give this paper and why?

5. In writing this paper, what did you learn about yourself as a writer? What did you learn about yourself as a thinker?

APPENDIX B

SENTENCE STEM COMPLETIONS

Complete the following sentence stems thoughtfully and honestly. Remember, this is to be done anonymously.

1. I write best when

2. My favorite kind of writing this year was

3. For me, revision is

4. Next year in my writing I want to

5. In English class this year I liked

6. If I could change one thing about my English class, it would be

7. If I could do one thing over again in English, it would be

8. The one area in English where I have shown the most growth this year is